

The *Journal* is pleased to present tandem articles on the Mānoa trolley and Jens Mathias Ostergaard. The author, Charles S. Bouslog, first wrote the biography of Ostergaard. He then decided that there were important things still to be covered and wrote the elegy on the trolley. The discussion of the impact of the Mānoa trolley is part of the Mānoa History project, whose director is Beatrice Krauss, Research Associate at Lyon Arboretum.

Civilization and the Mānoa Trolley, 1901-1933— An Elegy

Charles S. Bouslog

The topography of Honolulu on the island of O'ahu may be represented by an outspread right hand. The thumb is the oceanside prominence of Diamond Head. Between the fingers are four of the major valleys that come down from the Ko'olau mountains to the alluvial plain. Between the forefinger and the middle finger lies Nu'uānu Valley. This was the first of the valleys to undergo settlement, for it was convenient to the town (when most walked); and its higher regions provided a cool relief from the hot and dusty plain (for those with horses). Also, it was the only valley above Honolulu that permitted a mountain passage to the eastern, windward side, at the famed "Pali." Thus, it let the traveller go through to somewhere else.

To return to our metaphoric hand, between the thumb and the forefinger is Mānoa Valley. Closed off by two-thousand-foot cliffs at its head, it is not a pathway. Even to enter the valley at its western side, at Punahou School, one must climb a steep hill. In the late 19th Century the valley was for taro and dairy ranches, with more cows and foraging horses than residents.

And yet, strangely enough, when electric trolleys were introduced to the few major thoroughfares, in the fall of 1901, a line was also sent up that steep hill and into central Mānoa. It did not climb up to any residents; it was to bring them with it.

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The new Mānoa trolley (fig. 1) opened the valley to development and rushed it into the expansive new century. In particular, it would help to sell a very new hilltop subdivision, "College Hills" (fig. 2) and also expand an unplanned little "village" along the only other road, East Mānoa. In 1901 we are still more than a decade away from the impending world of uphill-tripping private autos. The trolley was the interim implementer. By it, lower Mānoa (lower, but yet hilltop) could now attract and comfortably house a middle class who were employed downtown. (So far as we can discover, in 1901 there were only a few middle class homes atop the Punahou hill, those of Cooper/Frazier, Effinger, and Castle.)¹

The Castle family made things happen. They were invested in the new trolley system. (They provided land at water's edge in Waikiki for an aquarium, which would attract riders for that extension of the car line. Thus they offered a reason for visiting marshy, duck-filled Waikiki, where they also owned developable land.) Indeed, their 6,000 square foot home, opened a year earlier in 1900, sitting on eight acres above Mānoa Road, would itself attract other quality homes and other trolley users. For the hillside estate the trolley was a special boon: there were 17 employees: four women and 13 men. Not all of whom would have to live in, now that they could ride to the end of Cooper Road; the uphill climb from that point was sufficient effort before starting a day's work. The Castles were very good at making a trolley line work and at stimulating real estate movement, and the new century was the right time indeed.²

The Mānoa trolley served many interests. The Woolsey family gave land for the widening of O'ahu Avenue to 'Ānuenue Street, so that the trolley could come that far into central or middle Mānoa, and so that their very busy *poi* factory would no longer be fixed in the pony-and-cart domain of the past century.

The trolley at times had the look of a Central American train, carrying bananas and chickens and buckets of *poi* and bundles of newspapers; and its upper rack full of umbrellas that would wait all day for their owners; and a bucket of sand for slippery tracks; and the conductor Jens Ostergaard (17 years on board) who dazzled by reading Hugo and Balzac and Flaubert and by hiking in the Mānoa hills to search for rare shells.

In 1907-1908 there came the first stirrings of a new College of Hawai'i, which by 1912 would have its first major building and an expanding faculty and student body. Its presence within range of the King/Beretania trolley and of the even closer Mānoa trolley stimu-

lated development through central Mānoa and furnished riders for the cars. One realizes that the new college (the future University of Hawai'i) could not have been placed anywhere else! Everything tied together and was much related to the trolley. In the entire system there were 850,000 riders in the last four months of 1901; 3,850,000 in 1902; and 9,101,000 in 1910.³ It was a working, community-supportive, light rail complex (such as some American cities are now rediscovering).

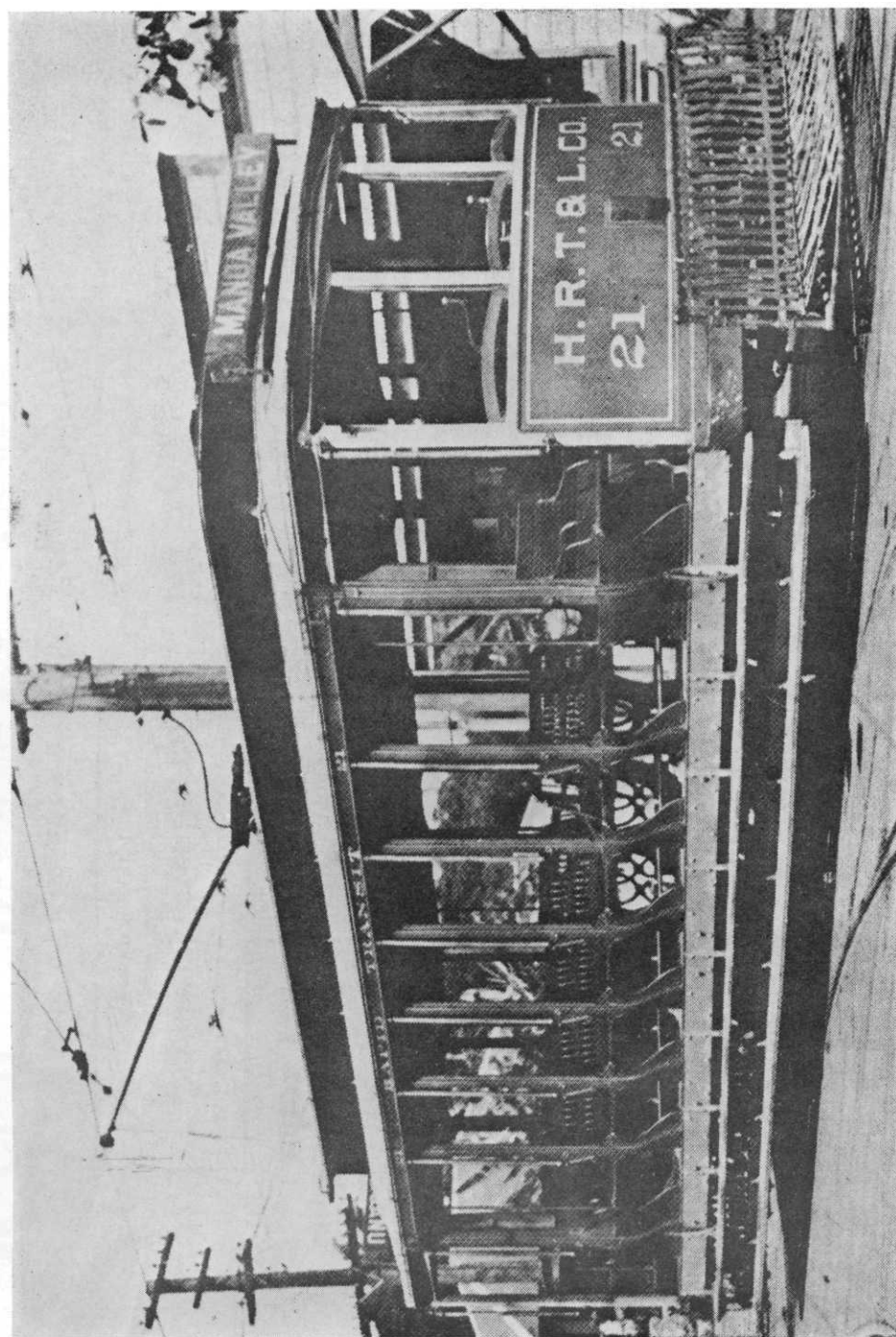
The first homes in College Hills, along Kamehameha Avenue, were ample in size and grounds, with a minimum of 20,000 square foot lots and service alleys in the rear. This was a new "silk stocking" area, where lived prominent professionals and their servants. When Caroline Castle came downhill in 1905 from "Puuhonua," where she had been living with "Mother" Castle, and was married (at age 47) to the Rev. W. D. Westervelt, they came to a fine home on Kamehameha. (But by 1910 they had moved on to the newest area, shoreline Diamond Head, the next Castle domain.)

The reversible seats were of cane, with airy wooden backs. The two car ends were partially enclosed, to protect the motorman and conductor from rain, and canvas curtains could be lowered on the open sides to shelter the passengers. In crowded times one could hold on at the step. (On the celebratory first day one car held 152 passengers, many clinging like briars.) The fare was a nickel; transfers were "liberal."⁴

The ringing up of each fare was a musical accompaniment to the passage of the car. The last trip began at 10:55 p.m. On weekends this last car would start sounding its bell as it passed along O'ahu Avenue, to summon swains from Kawaiaha'o Hall (the women's dorm at Mills Institute, the predecessor of today's Mid-Pacific). The bells of the trolley began again at 6:25 a.m.⁵

On opening day (Monday, 2 September 1901) the Mānoa car went all the way, from "Liliha and Judd Streets, back to College Hills and a return to the barns." The time allotted was four minutes from Mānoa to the Wilder switch, five more to the Lunalilo switch, five more to the Palace, and 11 more to Liliha, for a best time of about 23 to 25 minutes.⁶ But normally and at first, the Mānoa trolley ran a limited loop; it ran only from Punahou and Wilder Streets uphill and along Kamehameha, and on O'ahu Avenue to 'Ānuenue

FIG. 1. The Mānoa Trolley, put into service in 1902. (*Hawaiian Tramways* photo.)



COLLEGE HILLS

The Heavy Sales of Lots in this Choicest Suburb of
Honolulu have firmly established it as the
Unquestioned Residence Center for all
Future Home Building.

THE ELECTRIC CAR LINE OF THE RAPID TRANSIT CO.

is now Being Rapidly Built, Following the Main Avenues, through the
Entire College Hills Suburb, and will be Completed by Sept. 1st

The College Trustees are already constructing a

Complete Water Supply

with constant pressure from Rocky
Hill Reservoir.

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Quick Car Service

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Street, then, perhaps, it waited for five minutes. The conductor flipped the seats, and the car returned.

Later (perhaps in 1923) the line went "through." The cars now ran on the "Manoa Valley-Hotel Street" line, starting at 'A'ala Park, going through "the business district to Alapai Street, then over Beretania Street to Ke'eaumoku. . . ." This was a section not built until 1923. Then the car moved along Wilder Street to Punahou Street and was ready for the long hard climb. One way on this extended route was supposed to be 30 minutes.⁷

The trolleys for this line expired on 1 November 1933. New buses appeared; the trolleys lay idle. By September 1934 all track had been torn up, except for that going up Mānoa, and that, too, was soon to go, leaving some pleasantly wide streets behind.⁸

The day of the fixed rail, neighborhood trolley had ended. One could no longer see almost everyone on the car. One could not run and jump on all along the car, from either side. The trolley had become an anachronism. The discarded cars were soon dismantled and burned, and in the smoke an era drifted away.

NOTES

¹ Based on records in Hawaii Historic Places Inventory Files, Department of Land and Natural Resources.

² Maps showing the Castle holdings in Waikiki and papers on the Honolulu Rapid Transit Co. are in the Castle Foundation Papers, HMCS; See also Peggy Robb and Louise Vicars, "Manoa's (Puuhonua): the Castle Home, 1900-1941," *HJH* 16 (1982): 175.

³ "A Decade of Rapid Transit," *PP* 24 (Dec. 1911): 40.

⁴ *PCA*, 2 Sept. 1901: 1 and 3.

⁵ *PCA*, 2 Sept. 1901: 3.

⁶ *PCA*, 2 Sept. 1901: 3.

⁷ Roy S. Melvin and Robert Ramsay, *Hawaiian Tramways* (San Merino, Calif.: Golden West Books, 1960) 19, a 31-page pamphlet with many pictures.

⁸ Melvin and Ramsay, *Hawaiian Tramways*; "Vanishing Street Car Tracks," *PP* 47 (Sept. 1934): 9.